Panelized EIFS Has the Answers for Luxury Condominium Tower

With the accent on accents, the Seattle Heights Condominium stands tall.
The $35 Million Condominium Project Had to Be Completed on a Tight Schedule and Also Meet Seattle’s Strict Energy Code. EIFS and Panelization Made the Dream a Reality.

Cosmos Development and Administration Corp., in Bellevue, Wash., saw a business opportunity in downtown Seattle. The high end market for houses and condos had been improving, spurred in part by upper income California buyers who wanted to escape to Washington. This trend, combined with the fact there were very few luxury condominiums downtown, convinced Cosmos to lay the groundwork for a $35 million project—the Seattle Heights Condominiums.

The Callison Partnership, an international, award-winning design firm from Seattle, was hired to draw up the plans. Soon after, a 26-story, 220,000 square foot residential tower, featuring 240 luxury units ranging in cost from $85,000 to $3.5 million, began to take shape.

Setting the Stage

Bob Hutnik, a principal with Callison, said a number of factors came into play when specifying the building materials for the project’s exterior, as well as interior. “Seattle has a very strict energy performance code that we needed to meet,” Hutnik said. “We also had to consider the cost competitiveness of a material, its design flexibility and its ease of installation because we were on a short construction schedule.”

After conferring with the owner and its in-house general contractor, Cosmos Construction, Hutnik decided an exterior insulation and finish system would best satisfy all of the project’s needs. “We’ve had success with this type of cladding in the past. EIFS construction is very prevalent in the Seattle area.”

Putting Up the Walls

Once the reinforced concrete core of the building was in place, the Outsulation® System, manufactured by Dryvit Systems, Inc., West Warwick, R.I., was both field-applied and panelized to the 80,000 square feet of wall area. “Besides being attractive, affordable and energy efficient,” Hutnik said, “these panels don’t weigh much and were easy to handle and quick to install with a crane. We didn’t need to worry about scaffolding.”

Local panelizer, Pacific Construction Systems, set up shop in the parking garage of the condominium and fabricated the light-gauge structural steel framing to the appropriate design configuration. Varying thicknesses of poly-styrene insulation board were then adhered to the gypsum sheathing by Tuftey & O’Malley Inc., Everett, Wash.

After a base coat and reinforcing mesh were applied, several textured finishes in various colors were used as a final design accent for the panels. “When the panels were finished, some as large as 25 feet by 6 feet, we rolled them out into the alley, lifted them into position and welded and bolted them to the building structure,” said Jim Taylor, division manager at PCS.

The controlled fabrication process
enabled the panels to be produced to close tolerances for uniform quality and superior performance. “Buy construction the panels inside, the panelizers were able to work right through bad weather,” said Paul Armitstead, development coordinator for Cosmos. “We also felt reassured that the on-site fabrication provided maximum quality, scheduling and cost control.”

Outsulation was also field applied on the first five floors. A high-impact mesh was used for extra reinforcement around the high-traffic areas. V-grooves were cut into the insulation to match the joints on the floors that were panelized above.

**Exterior Finish**

The majority of the building’s exterior was coated with a 100 percent acrylic, dirt pickup resistant, textured Sandblast” finish in Van Dyke and custom green colors. The base and tower were spray applied with Dryvit Stone Mist” in a Desert color. The Stone Mist finish consists of ceramically colored quartz aggregates in a 100 percent acrylic binder which reflect the natural sunlight and add extra dimensions to the building. “The building’s exterior has generated a positive response from everyone I’ve spoken to,” Armitstead concluded. Personally, “I like the design because if is compatible with the buildings downtown while staying in context with older buildings in the neighborhood.”